
Clarkia

Fuels Assessment

Areas within the one mile of home sites:

Located in the southwestern corner of Shoshone County, Clarkia is surrounded by managed forests in the possession of a variety of federal, state, and private owners. The owners in this area are actively managing these forestlands through timber harvesting, fuels and slash management, reforestation, thinning, and roads maintenance. The resulting landscape is a diverse mix



of forest tree species, tree ages, and tree density. As a result, fire risk in this area is generally lower than in other locale in Shoshone County.



To the west of Clarkia, US Forest Service ownership dominates. These forests have been actively managed to a lesser degree than the surrounding forests that are privately owned. These lands show evidence of past fires and some logging. While most of this region would be classified as fire behavior fuel model 8, a lesser amount (10%) would be classified as model 10. Because of

the close proximity to the community of Clarkia the dense, overcrowded forests with dead and dying trees closest to the community (in sections 1 & 12, T42N, R1E, and

sections 6 &7, T42N, R2E) represents increased risk to wildfire spread. This land is managed by the US Forest Service and is also the location of the US Forest Service work center.



Surrounding the community of Clarkia and much of state highway 8, pasture lands and scattered shrubs dominate the landscape. These areas transition from fescues and grasses to scattered forest tree species. Fire behavior fuel model 1 is representative of the fields surrounding the community, with model 2 representing the transition from fields to forestland, including many miles of river bottom land that extends into the forest. These grasses represent fire spread risk when the fuels are cured or dead as fire spread is governed by the fine, very porous, and continuous herbaceous layer. Fires can move rapidly through this layer and transition into or from the forest, or into home sites. These fields support an active cattle grazing interest. These bovine serve to keep the grasses clipped and the resulting fuels reduced. Because of this, the home site risks are abated greatly.





Commercial forestlands near homes, and beyond, are representative of a diverse mix of tree species, tree ages, and density, giving rise to a diversity of fire behavior fuel models that range from model 5 (green low shrub fields with tree regeneration) to model 8 (scattered dead material in mature forests), and from model 12 to 13 (where active logging has

created logging slash prior to treatment). This area has moderate slopes and is well roaded.

Fire fighting efforts in this zone are aided by the diversity of forest cover types and a landscape that would burn only in the most extreme weather conditions because of the discontinuous tree canopy and forest fire fuels present. When considering the entire county and where communities are located, the community of Clarkia is most likely at the lowest risk to wildfire spread because of this buffer of actively managed forestlands.

Community Risk Assessment

The 2000 census reports that the population of Clarkia was 190 persons in 2000. There are approximately 85 buildings within a 3-mile buffer of the community of Clarkia. All of these buildings are considered at low to moderate risk to loss in a wildfire that burns the forests surrounding this community. This particular community is surrounded by managed forests that are not likely to burn intensely, but still have a potential to burn. For this reason, this community has been ranked



with a low to moderate risk rating.

There is no rural or volunteer fire district serving the community of Clarkia. The Clearwater-Potlatch Timber Protective Association provides most of the wildland fire protection in the area—mainly to the south and southeast, with the Idaho Department of Lands (St. Maries) providing wildland fire protection services to the north. The US Forest Service (St. Maries) provides wildfire protection to the northeast of Clarkia (see accompanying maps of the coverage boundaries).



Although this community is at a relatively low risk to wildfire losses of homes, there are specific treatments that can improve the risk rating for individual homes and areas. Specifically, some of the homes in this area are built at the intersection of fields and forestlands. While these areas are scenic and

desirable from an access standpoint, they are also at increased risk to wildfire because of trees with branches from the ground to the tip of the tree, dead and dying trees near homes, and tall grasses that are not grazed. These individual homes would benefit from home site defensible spaces at a distance of 200 feet surrounding the home and out-buildings. In addition, some of these homes have small bridges or cattle guards in the driveway that should be rated for weight restrictions. In a few cases driveways should be trimmed of overhanging shrubs and trees to allow emergency vehicles better access.

Cattle grazing in this community serves to keep the forbs, fescues, and shrubs trimmed and reduced in volume. This serves the community well from a wildfire standpoint and should be continued into the future. Adding additional acres of forestlands to active cattle grazing would serve to proportionally decrease the forest fuels in these areas as well.



Active forest management south and southeast of Clarkia has targeted mature forests with increased risk of wildfire. US Forest Service land managers have entered stands and removed the small diameter trees, cut the underbrush, and prepared the site for prescribed fire treatment as of the summer 2002. These sites are located near roads, on south aspects, and on a variety of slopes from relatively flat to steep. The trees left on site are generally dominant and co-dominant Douglas-fir, ponderosa pine, and western



larch. The trees are healthy and well spaced. These sites represent an excellent example of wildfire mitigation efforts in and around communities and should be repeated on hundreds of acres in the region. These sites would further benefit from pruning of the leave trees, although these dead branches do not pose a significant fire risk in these managed stands of trees.



Additional US Forest Service lands to the west of Clarkia and state highway 8 would benefit from similar treatments to mitigate the fire risk from the west. Treatments should focus on those lands adjacent to the highway, and where recreational uses are the greatest.

